



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF



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SPECIAL ISSUE

9 FEBRUARY 1965

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Vietnam

Communist Military Activity: Discernible Communist military reaction to the US and South Vietnamese air strikes on Dong Hoi and Chap Le remains minimal. North Vietnamese and Chinese Communist aircraft apparently were not sent up although radars were tracking the raids. The North Vietnamese Navy, at least, is still on alert, and units are under orders to resist further attacks.

Since about the time of the US air strike at Dong Hoi on 7 February, radio silence has been maintained on certain North Vietnamese ground force communications nets: those in southern North Vietnam, some in Laos, that of the possible North Vietnamese headquarters element recently located in South Vietnam, and those serving the Viet Cong infiltration routes. It is difficult now to determine whether this constitutes a defensive measure or reflects preparations for future actions. In any case, we have never before seen anything on this scale in North Vietnamese communications.

Viet Cong Activity: Within South Vietnam, other Viet Cong attacks occurring almost simultaneously with the Pleiku attack on 7 February suggest a general intensification of Viet Cong activity following the end of the New Year cease-fire. In Quang Tin Province, an estimated Viet Cong battalion lost 220 men in an attack on a government post. There are also preliminary reports of two battalion-sized attacks in the Binh Dinh Province. On 8 February, the Viet Cong's Liberation Armed Forces Command broadcast a call to "strike strongly" to "protect the north and liberate the south."

Communist China: Peiping is developing a major propaganda campaign. However, the Chinese, even in a strong government statement of 9 January which repeats earlier warnings that the Chinese people will "not stand idly by," avoid any additional public commitment of support for Hanoi. Peiping reiterates its claim that the US attacks give the Chinese and others the "right" to assist Hanoi but is vague concerning the response should the US "insist on expanding the war."

The USSR: Demonstrations against the US Embassy in Moscow have begun.

Soviet statements thus far suggest that the USSR will go ahead in supplying further military materiel to the North Vietnamese. However, they also show marked caution in making any far-reaching commitment to Hanoi. An analysis of the most recent Soviet statements is at Annex.

ANNEX

Soviet Reaction

Soviet reaction to US air reprisals against North Vietnam has reflected the difficulties confronting Soviet leaders in their relations both with the Asian Communist governments and the US. An 8 February Soviet Government statement--the first authoritative comment from the USSR--was brief and generally cautious. Although it condemned the US reprisals and warned against any "illusion" that such "aggression" can be carried out with impunity, the statement did not advance the Soviet commitment beyond earlier pledges of "necessary assistance" to Hanoi.

Moscow declared that it "will be forced" to join its allies in "further measures to safeguard the security and to strengthen the defensive capability" of North Vietnam. Although this reaffirms the USSR's readiness to provide a substantial increase in military assistance, it does not appear to signal any significant increase in the level of aid envisaged prior to Kosygin's departure for Hanoi.

Soviet Premier Kosygin's 8 February speech in Hanoi also carried no indication that the USSR intends to undertake any far-reaching commitment in North Vietnam in the aftermath of the US strikes on the DRV. Kosygin couched the USSR's pledge of support for the Hanoi regime in rather general terms. He asserted that "our internationalist duty is to increase and consolidate the strength and national defense potential of the socialist community." He declared that "neither the DRV, nor the Soviet Union, nor the CPR wanted war."

The Soviets also tried to influence US policy by injecting a cautious warning that, although the USSR favors further improvement in bilateral relations, "aggressive manifestations" might cancel out steps already taken to improve relations.

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The trend of Soviet reaction thus far suggests that the USSR will continue to avoid military guarantees or specific commitments to defend North Vietnam. However, the Soviet Government statement is considerably stronger than Khrushchev's reaction to the Tonkin Gulf incidents last August. This attempt to demonstrate support for North Vietnam reflects the intention of the new Soviet leaders to regain influence in Hanoi and to compete more effectively with the Chinese Communists.

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